

ILLINOIS FAMILIES Now and Forever

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship®

Department of Children and Family Services®

May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month



DCFS honors foster families and relatives who care for approximately 16,000 Illinois children.

Thank a foster parent today!



www.state.il.us/dcfs



WHEREAS, to foster means to nourish, cherish and encourage, which is what foster parents do for children whose natural parents can no longer provide them with care; and

WHEREAS, foster parents meet a very special need in our society by ensuring that these children receive attention, respect, love, understanding, compassion, and health and educational services; and

WHEREAS, thousands of caring adults in Illinois have opened their hearts as well as their homes to provide loving and stable environments for more than 18,000 children; and

WHEREAS, the contributions of Illinois foster parents to the welfare of these children are incalculable and irreplaceable; and

WHEREAS, Illinois has remained a national leader in adoptions, primarily due to the commitment shown by the state's licensed foster parents and relative foster parents, who are responsible for the vast majority of adoptions of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) wards; and

WHEREAS, foster parents throughout the state helped DCFS become the nation's first state child welfare agency to earn re-accreditation by the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services; and

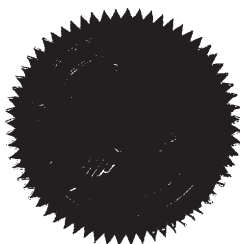
WHEREAS, there remains a great demand for additional caring adults in Illinois to consider opening their homes to older children in need of foster care; and

WHEREAS, Illinois foster parents deserve our gratitude and respect for the work they do everyday to ensure that our children receive the support they need throughout their maturing process:

THEREFORE, I, Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim May 2005 as **FOSTER PARENT APPRECIATION MONTH** in Illinois, and encourage all citizens to recognize and support the gracious and loving foster parents in their communities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Illinois to be affixed.

Done at the Capitol, in the City of Springfield,
this TWENTY-SECOND day of APRIL, in
the Year of Our Lord two thousand and
FIVE, and of the State of Illinois
the one hundred and EIGHTY-SEVENTH



Debra White
SECRETARY OF STATE

Rod R. Blagojevich
GOVERNOR



From the DCFS Director

Dear Foster Parents:

It is with great pleasure that I congratulate and thank every one of you for the contribution you make to the children and families of Illinois. May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month in Illinois, a time to place special emphasis on the critical work that you do. Some of you may participate in activities that honor you and acknowledge your work during this special month, and some of you may receive specific recognition for the important work you do. Especially now, my message to all foster parents is one of thanks.

Fostering is difficult, but rewarding work. Today DCFS is responsible for 18,000 children, down significantly from 51,000 in 1997. We share a commitment with the foster parent community to care for a population of children that is older, stays in care longer and presents more complex demands. These children need you more now than ever.

You are answering the call. I appreciate the sacrifices that you make. We truly cannot protect and parent the abused and neglected children of Illinois without your assistance.

DCFS continues to work with the child welfare community to make changes designed to do a better job of giving foster families the services they need. With you, we have begun to strengthen our policies and practices to fulfill our mission of making sure children are safe and protected.

I have asked my staff and colleagues to place more emphasis on foster parents during this very special month. We know that you are critical members of the child welfare team, and we respect and value your work, opinions and advice.

Please take time this month to reflect on the important work that you do, congratulate one another, and know that you are both needed and appreciated.

Sincerely,

May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month

Take time to remember why foster care is so crucial and so special. Below are 10 ways you and your family can mark the occasion.

1. Establish May as the month for an annual family photo.
2. Send a card to encourage a foster parent who is having a rough time.
3. Tell five friends about the rewards of foster parenting.
4. Make copies of your favorite articles from Families Now and Forever to pass along.
5. Make plans with another foster family to trade an afternoon watching the others' kids. Take the time to do something to refresh yourself.
6. Join a foster parent support group.
7. Meet a couple of fostering friends and update the kids' lifebooks.
8. Send a card to a foster child who was formerly in your home.
9. Thumb through the Lending Library catalog to find a book of interest, and knock off some training hours.
10. Thumb through the regular library to find a book that has absolutely nothing to do with foster care and ENJOY.

Groups and associations offer advice and assistance statewide

DCFS, private agencies and community initiatives have sponsored many support groups and associations to assist Cook County parents. The following list can help identify a group that may suit your family. This list is a beginning and will be updated. Please contact the Editor at 312-814-6824 with any corrections or information on other groups that should be listed.

Cook County Support Groups

ADA S. MCKINLEY ASSOCIATION

Contact: Gladys Boyd at 312-808-6174
Meets monthly, call for details.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES FP NETWORKING GROUP

Contact: Margaret Monahan at 312-655-7984
Meets last Wednesday from 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
651 W. Lake, Chicago

CATHOLIC CHARITIES FP NETWORKING GROUP

Contact: Margaret Monahan at 312-655-7984
Meets last Thursday from 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.
1717 Rand Road, Des Plaines

C.H.I.L.D. ASSOCIATION

Contact: Ida Lopez (Support Specialist) at
708-755-5314
Meets last Friday (Apr. - Dec.) at 10 a.m.
DCFS Harvey Office
15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey

CHILDREN OF EASTERN EUROPEAN REGIONS (CHEER)

www.cheerchicago.org

CIRCLE OF LOVE

Contact: Stacey Saffold at 773-419-4660
Meets third Saturday from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Includes Boy and Girl Scout programs
Sherman Park Library
5440 South Racine, Chicago

COOK COUNTY FOSTER PARENT COUNCIL

Contact: Geraldine Wilson at 312-328-2325
Meets first Tuesday at 10 a.m.
Fernwood Park Fieldhouse
10436 S. Wallace St., Chicago

COOK CENTRAL FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

Contact: Adrienne Welenc at 773-292-7700
Meets fourth Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.
DCFS, 3518 W. Division, Chicago, IL
No December meeting

COOK NORTH REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Sari Rowitz at 312-328-2484
Meets second Tuesday at 10 a.m.
1911 S. Indiana, Chicago

COOK SOUTH DCFS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Jennifer Baker at 773-928-3799
Meets third Wednesday at 10 a.m.
Meetings rotate between DCFS Harvey and
Emerald offices, call for details

COOK SOUTH FOSTER PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

Info line at 773-371-6113
Meets second Tuesday at 10 a.m.
DCFS 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

FAMILYNET FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATION

Contact: Betty Seymour at 773-224-4396 or Joyce
Campbell at 773-721-7977
Meets third Thursday from 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
South Central Community Services
1021 East 83rd Street
Potluck dinner at 6:30, children are welcome

HISPANIC ASSOCIATION (COMBINES WITH NORTH EAST FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION)

Contact: Edith Cruz at 773-425-4634

HULL HOUSE ASSOC. FOSTER PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

Contact: Julia Johnson at 773-374-9451, ext 136
Meets third Wednesday at 10 a.m.
8753 S. Greenwood, Chicago

JEWISH CHILDREN'S BUREAU ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Nancy Dorfman-Schwartz at 312-444-2090
Meets third Thursday at Noon
216 West Jackson, Chicago

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON ADOPTABLE CHILDREN

Contact: Pat Cooper at 847-698-3668
Meets periodically, call for schedule
327 North Stewart, Lombard

ILLINOIS PARENTS FOR BLACK ADOPTION

Contact: Drucilla Fair at 773-734-2305
7930 S. Colfax Avenue, Chicago
Offers pre-and post-adoption support

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF ILLINOIS FOSTER PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

Contact: Denice Clark at 773-371-2754
Meets Monday or Tuesdays (group votes)
from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
11740 South Western Avenue, Chicago

NEW BEGINNINGS FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT ASSOCIATION

Contact: Regina Boyd at 708-385-6263
Meets first Monday at 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Fernwood Park
10436 S. Wallace, Chicago
Children are welcome with adult. Bring a dish.

NORTH EAST AREA FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

Contact: Donsetta Blakely at 773-778-7445
Meets third Thursday at 10 a.m.
Sherman Park Library
5440 S. Racine Avenue, Chicago

NORTHERN ILLINOIS FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

Contact: Kathy Bilbo at 773-866-5729
Call for schedule/location details.

NORTH WEST SUBURBAN FOSTER/ADOPT NETWORK

Contact: Sandra Reinhard at 847-255-8783
Meets second Wednesday at 9:30 a.m.
Arlington Countryside Church
916 E. Hintz Rd., Arlington Heights

SOUTH CITY FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

Contact: Carol Lukacek at 708-891-2206
Meets second Thursday at 10 a.m.
DCFS 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

YOUTH CAMPUS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Debra Pinkett at 312-243-0533
Meets every other month
901 W. Jackson Chicago

Northern Region Support Groups

ADOPTIVE FAMILIES TODAY

Contact: Kathy Casey 847-382-0858
P.O. Box 1726, Barrington
www.adoptivefamiliestoday.org
Serves families in Cook, DuPage, Lake, McHenry & Kane counties

ADOPTION NETWORK

Contact: Michelle Mattes at 847-515-3921
5070 Highwood Lane, Lake in the Hills

DEKALB AREA ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Contact: Mary Kowalski at 815-758-4307
Email: Heroncove@aol.com
303 N. Second Street, DeKalb
Serves families in DeKalb & neighboring counties

FOX VALLEY ADOPTION GROUP

Contact: Maureen Van Scoit at 630-844-9385
968 Wellington Circle, Aurora, IL 60505
Serves families in DuPage, Kane & Kendall counties

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF ILLINOIS FOSTER PARENT GROUP

Contact: Sharon Franklin 815-284-7796 ext. 2108
Meets fourth Monday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
1261 Illinois Route 38, Nachusa
No summer meetings

NORTHERN REGION DCFS FOSTER CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meets second Thursday from 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
DCFS Aurora Regional Office
8 East Galena Blvd., Aurora
A light dinner is served at 6 p.m.

REACHOUT OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS

Contact: Debbie Perez at 847-566-4316
Meets first Monday at 6:15 p.m.
Warren Township Library
224 N. O'Plain Road, Gurnee
Serves families in Lake and McHenry counties
No meetings in August or December

Central Region Support Groups

CENTRAL ILLINOIS ADOPTIVE FAMILIES

Contact: Candy Ogden at 309-662-3349
2206 Oakwood Ave., Bloomington
Serves families in Dewitt, Fulton, Ford,
Logan, Mason, McLean, & Woodford counties

CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

Contact: Black Hawk College FP Training at
888-50-PRIDE
Meets monthly at various locations
Serves Peoria families

KEEPING THE PROMISE - CHAMPAIGN COUNTY AND MCLEAN COUNTY

Contact: Maggie Gould at 309-454-1770

LAND OF LINCOLN FAPA

Contact: Cindy Backstein at 217-498-8774
Meets third Monday at 6 p.m.
Shakey's Pizza Buffet on MacArthur, Springfield

OURS THROUGH ADOPTION

Contact: Jean Hess at 563-322-6469
2618 Arlington Avenue, Davenport
Serves families in Rock Island, Whiteside, Henry &
Mercer counties

PARENT TO PARENT (LSSI)

Contact: Bea Vores at 217-348-3333
Meets third Thursday at 7 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
9th and Cleveland, Charleston
Serves families in Cumberland, Clark, Coles, &
Edgar counties

SAFE HOMES FOR KIDS

Contact: Joyce Loy at 309-794-3558
Meets third Monday at 9 a.m.
DCFS Office
500 42nd Street, Rock Island

SOUTH CENTRAL ILLINOIS ADOPTIVE PARENTS ASSOCIATION (SCIAPA)

Contact: Philip Limper at 217-744-9680
3013 Dunwich, Springfield
Serves families in Sangamon, Christian, Macon,
Montgomery, Morgan & Menard counties

Southern Region Support Groups

EFFINGHAM ADOPTION/GUARDIANSHIP PRESER- VATION PROGRAM SUPPORT GROUP

Contact: Tiffany Cox at 618-521-1271
Meets third Tuesday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
First Church of God
2600 South Banker Street, Effingham
Dinner included and families must RSVP.
Open to all adoptive parents and family members.

HERRIN ADOPTION/GUARDIANSHIP PRESERVATION PROGRAM SUPPORT GROUP

Contact: Julie Fritzler at 618-988-1330
Meets third Thursday from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Matthews and Associates
109 Lou Ann Drive, Herrin
Dinner included and families must RSVP.
Open to all adoptive parents and family members.

ALL-DOPT

Contact: Marietta Bear & Susan Koniak at 618-667-2493
654 Bauer Road, Troy
includes international adoptions

HOME ADVANTAGE SOUTH

Contact: Kim Hutchcraft at 618-435-8293
Meets second Monday at 6:30 p.m.
800 Joplin, Benton

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF ILLINOIS - SOUTHERN REGION

Contact: Jean Switzer at 618-997-996 or 800-455-
Meets fourth Tuesday from 5:30-8 p.m.
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
1500 DeYoung, Marion
Training credits and childcare provided

ST. PAUL'S ADOPTION SUPPORT GROUP

Contact: Royann Touchette at 618-476-3745
5209 Bohleysville Rd., Milstadt

DCFS INVITES YOU TO THE ILLINOIS STATE FAIR

August 12 – August 21, 2005

Corner of Peoria Road and Sangamon Ave., Springfield

***Foster Families, Relative Caregiver Families, Adoptive Families,
& Guardianship Families - Choose Your Own Discount Day!***

This is Your ONLY Invitation to the State Fair. Please Act NOW if You Wish to Attend.

Please complete the coupon below if you would like to attend the Illinois State Fair and get the discounts available for foster, adoptive, and guardianship families. **Please mail or fax the coupon to DCFS TODAY, and no later than June 30, 2005. Nothing will be sent to you unless you return this coupon. Reminders will NOT be sent.**

If you return the coupon now, in July you will be sent:

- A ticket that will get your vehicle and everyone in it into the Fair and parked for one fee of \$3.
- 1 food ticket for each family member, worth \$3 in food or drink.
- One ride ticket for each family member that provides unlimited rides for \$8 during certain times **ONLY on Monday, August 15 – Friday, August 19.**
- One half-price entry ticket to the Exotic Animals Petting Zoo for each family member during certain times **ONLY on Monday, August 15 – Friday, August 19.**
- A special map of the fairgrounds made just for you.

Please Complete the Form Below & Mail or Fax to DCFS Today

COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS COUPON NO LATER THAN JUNE 30, 2005

Office of Communications, Department of Children and Family Services
406 East Monroe Street, Station 65
Springfield, IL 62701-1498
Fax: 217-524-0014

Tickets may NOT be requested by telephone.

We are a licensed foster family, relative caregiver, a guardianship family or have adopted a child through DCFS, and we would like to attend the 2005 Illinois State Fair. We understand that only our foster, adopted and guardianship children and family members who live in our home consistent with DCFS licensing regulations are eligible for these special offers.

There will be _____ family members in our party. Number of vehicles _____ (limit 2)

If requesting more than 8 tickets, please print the name and phone number of your licensing or subsidy worker.

Worker's name _____ Phone number _____

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Mailing Address: _____ Apt. No. _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

For foster families only:

We are supervised by DCFS _____

We are supervised by a private agency _____ Agency Name _____

Note - Please bring a copy of this invitation or a copy of a recent board or subsidy invoice with you when you attend the Fair. You may be asked to show this invitation or invoice in order to use the tickets. It is illegal to sell these tickets or transfer them to any person who is not a family member living in your home.

Movin' On Up: News for youth moving to adulthood

This is the first of a new series offering information for youth transitioning to adulthood...

The DCFS Office of Education and Transition Services staff can help prepare youth as they move toward adulthood. Transition Coordinators are now making regular rounds to various field offices to help youth, their caregivers and staff understand and access transition services.

They will be advising on DCFS programs offered in the areas of employment, education, scholarships, housing, transitional/independent living and life skills. There are many changes in the works to help youth as they move toward adulthood. The Transit-

ion Coordinators look forward to being of service. The schedule follows:

- Cook Central, Maywood field office, on Mondays
Phone: 708-338-6696
- Cook South, Emerald field office, on Tuesdays 8:30 - 5
Phone: 773-371-6125
- Cook North, 1911 S. Indiana, on Wednesdays 8:30 - 5
Phone: 312-328-2662
- Springfield field office, first Monday of the month, 10 - 3
Phone: 217-782-4000
- Peoria field office, second Monday of the month, 10 - 3
Phone: 309-693-5400
- Urbana field office, third Monday of the month, 10 - 3
Phone: 217-333-1034
- Rockford field office, first Tuesday of the month, 10 - 2
Phone: 815-987-7640
- DeKalb field office, second Tuesday of the month, 10 - 2
Phone: 815-787-5300
- Joliet field office, third Tuesday of the month, 10 - 2
Phone: 815-730-4000
- Mt. Vernon field office, first Monday of the month, 10 - 2:30
Phone: 618-244-8427
- East St. Louis field office, second Monday of the month, 10 - 2:30
Phone: 618-394-7200
- Marion field office, third Monday of the month, 10 - 2:30
Phone: 618-993-8639

DCFS to help develop national program to reduce child abuse

Illinois is one of just seven states chosen to develop a model linking early childhood education to child abuse prevention efforts. The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) invited Illinois DCFS to participate in the "Strengthening Families" national pilot. Participants were chosen based on strong leadership, a commitment to dedicate time and resources and the knowledge of how to link existing programs with the Strengthening Families initiative.

"Our study showed that early childhood programs can be excellent vehicles for supporting and teaching families about parenting skills and child development on a daily basis, linking

them to needed services and social networks, and, responding quickly to early warning signs of family stress – all key ingredients to preventing harm to children," said Judy Langford of the Strengthening Families initiative.

Illinois, along with Alaska, Arkansas, New Hampshire, Missouri, Rhode Island and Wisconsin, was chosen from among 27 state applications. CSSP plans to provide training and technical assistance to pilot states as well as the opportunity for them to work closely with one another in implementing the initiative.

"We believe that the children in our protection can greatly benefit

from efforts to innovate and improve child care settings. This initiative also provides the opportunity to increase awareness of family strengthening as a part of quality child care and potentially reach over 200,000 children," said DCFS Director Bryan Samuels.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan public policy organization created in 1979 and located in Washington, DC. Their work promotes policies and practices that strengthen families, build thriving communities, and promote more equitable outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

Teen Adoption Study: Youth are never too old to be adopted

Deciding to be Adopted

For teens, the prospect of being adopted can be complicated by birth family loyalties, the drive to be more independent, and the sense that they are no longer children who need parental supervision. Adoptees in the “Successful Adolescent Adoption Study” reported that they decided to become a permanent member of a new family for four primary reasons.

1) Belonging. Many participants talked about the need to be cared for by people who made them feel safe and secure. They needed to belong. “I felt that I have found a match for myself. I found out that it was right for me,” reported one youth.

2) Stability. Other adoptees considered adoption because they wanted to have a stable family. As one teen expressed it, “I would have a family who would always be there for me. I wouldn’t have to move around all of the time.” “And no matter what,” asserted another participant, “when I grow up and I move out into my own house, I would always have a mother to come back to. When I have kids, they will actually have a grandmother.”

3) Opportunities. Some adoptees said they thought they would have more opportunities (for school, life options, etc.) if they got adopted. Most talked about being a better person and having more chances to try new

things. “I probably would have been a hoodlum or causing a lot of trouble,” claimed one youth, “if I didn’t make this choice in my life to be adopted.”

4) Reuniting with siblings.

For many teens, adoption was an avenue through which they could live with their siblings. “I was happy,” noted one youth, “because I then knew I would be with my family—if not all of it, at least half of it.”

“If you get a chance, it’s the greatest thing in the world. No matter how old you are, you still need love and to give love. You need someone to see on the holidays, and you need grandparents. You need a family and the support they give.”

Going through the Adoption Process

When asked to identify the difficulties they anticipated prior to adoption, the youth had a lot to say. Among their concerns: adjusting to a new family, school, and community; missing birth family members; and worrying about disruption. When asked to rate adoption from 1 (low) to 10 (high), most were enthusiastic. A

few study participants gave lower ratings—a seven, a five, and even a one. Without exception, though, the low ratings were given because the process took so long!

The Best and Worst Parts of Being Adopted

At the time the youth were interviewed, all of their adoptions had been finalized for at least one year. Many adoptions had been finalized for five years or more. Adoptees were more than willing to share their feelings about the best and worst parts of adoption. The best aspects mirrored their anticipated benefits.

- “The best part is to have a family and a home to come home to when you’re not feeling safe.”
- “If it weren’t for my mom, I wouldn’t be where I am today. In the beginning, I had given up. I really tested her, especially in school. There is no way I’d be where I am today without being adopted. The best part is the relationship I have with my mom now.”
- “My parents persevered and understood me. I didn’t make it easy for them.”
- “The attention is the best part. The attention and love are something I never got when I was little.”

Aside from typical teen complaints (“The worst part is having curfew when I’m not in church.”), many of the adolescents could not think of a worst part about the adoption itself. They did, however, express sadness at being separated from old friends and birth family members.

Tips for Facilitating Successful Teen Adoptions

The Successful Adolescent Adoption Study was designed to explore the concept of success in adolescent adoptions and determine what leads to success. In listening to adolescent adoptees and their adoptive parents, it is clear that the adoption process needs to be adapted to better meet adolescents’ needs. Below are recommendations for facilitating the successful adoption of adolescents.

- **Individually prepare adolescents for the adoption process** by 1) explaining their legal status; 2) offering adoption as a viable option for permanence; 3) offering support and information as they consider the adoption option; 4) explaining how the adoption process will proceed; 5) assessing adolescents to determine their level of adjustment regarding birth family issues; and 6) providing support as needed to help them deal appropriately with birth family issues.



- **Employ caseworkers for adolescent adoptions who have positive attitudes about teen adoptions** and who are eager to find homes for adolescents. Streamline the process as much as possible so that the teens can be adopted when they are ready.
- **Include recruitment strategies that offer opportunities for adults in the community to get to know teens in foster care.** Work through ongoing programs like Big Brothers Big Sisters or establish a new program with similar opportunities for pairing adults and adolescents. After attachments develop, employ traditional teen adoption recruitment strategies.
- **Initiate or continue contact with biological families when it is safe to do so and teens desire it.** Adoptive parents can teach teens how to be safe during these contacts so that teens can learn to protect themselves physically and emotionally.

Written by Cynthia Flynn and Wendy Welch. Flynn and Welch conduct research and evaluate social service programs at the Center for Child and Family Studies at the University of South Carolina. This article was originally printed in its entirety in Fall 2003 “Adoptalk”, published by the North American Council on Adoptable Children, 970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106, St. Paul, MN 55114; 651-644-3036; www.nacac.org.”

Tell it like it is: Readers respond

Families Now and Forever wants to hear the “real deal” on caring for children from those who know best. We asked the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council the question: **What would make you feel appreciated during Foster Parent Appreciation Month?**

“Just a thank you from my kids (without them being prompted).”

Donsetta Blakely, Cook North

“Getting more support specialists back for the DCFS foster parents.”

Gladys Boyd, Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association

“If foster parents got a board rate increase.”

Adrienne Welenc, Cook Central

“I would like to have a cake and ice cream celebration with all the foster children that I had fostered present.”

Claudia Davis, Southern Region

“People should get back to me with an answer to my questions...Even if the answer is no or I don’t know. I would appreciate a response.”

Vicky Kline, Southern Region

The new question is... **What was one school-related experience with your child that gave you the most grief or gratification?**

You can contact me with your response by e-mail at vjames@idcfs.state.il.us or by phone at 312-814-6824. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Vanessa James, Editor



**Illinois Families
Now and Forever**

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

Bryan Samuels, DCFS Director

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Purpose: To help busy families more effectively parent children currently or formerly in DCFS care. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

Address Changes: Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change office addresses or request staff copies through the Editor.

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A family for me

Alontae [7280] Alontae, 15, is a caring young man who likes to share and is considerate of others' feelings. He loves sports, especially basketball and track. He also enjoys working with his hands. When he has free time, he likes to relax by listening to hip-hop music or playing video games. He also enjoys going bowling with friends.

His foster mother and his teacher said Alontae is wonderful to be around, especially in one-on-one situations. He is comfortable expressing his feelings and concerns. The family for Alontae can be patient and loving, yet firm with consequences when needed. You can make a commitment to help Alontae develop to his full potential. Alontae will benefit from having someone at home who can help him with schoolwork.

Bradley [5934] This lovable young man will charm you right away! Bradley, 15, has an outgoing personality and a great sense of humor that everyone around him appreciates. He likes to play the guitar, especially when he can get friends and family members to sing along with him. He also likes to play baseball with the other kids in school. Bradley has Down Syndrome and communicates mostly through sign language.

Bradley's foster mom said she loves him and enjoys his outgoing personality. "He's really something else," she said. His teachers agree that Bradley is very lovable. He enjoys helping others and volunteers to assist with errands at school. New parents for Bradley would be caring, patient, and supportive. Bradley will benefit from a family who can make a long-term commitment to his care.

Brianna [7067] Brianna, 12, loves to take care of animals. She even has a collection of stuffed animals that she looks after when no real ones are around! As you might imagine, Brianna hopes to join a family that has a dog or a cat so she can continue to learn about being a good caretaker. In her free time, Brianna likes to express herself by singing along to Disney songs. She also enjoys being outside, especially when she can swim or play basketball.

Brianna's foster parent and her teacher said they enjoy spending time with her. She has a great sense of humor and likes to do activities with adults. The right family for Brianna can give her lots of love and attention. You can provide her with a safe, structured home and close supervision. Be sure to let Brianna know she is an important part of your family. She will do best as the youngest or only child.

Charlie [7258] Charlie, 11, is a happy, affectionate young man. While he doesn't speak, he loves to laugh and spend time with others. When he's on his own, he enjoys playing with stuffed animals, especially his favorite toy monkey. Because Charlie has cerebral palsy, he generally uses a wheelchair to move around. He also crawls and can stand with assistance.

His teachers and foster parents said that Charlie behaves well at home and school. He is warm and friendly towards others. The parents for Charlie would be patient and loving. You can advocate for his medical and educational needs. Charlie needs a family who can make a life-long commitment to his care.

Christopher [7002] Christopher, 15, is a creative, articulate young man. He loves to spend time sketching and has been widely praised for his work. "He has a wonderful gift for drawing," said his teacher. Christopher also communicates well with others, and his charm and sense of humor have won him many friends.

His worker said Christopher cares about and is interested in other people. His foster parent said Christopher can be very hard-working. The family for Christopher would love and nurture him and provide him with good guidance. You can be patient and understanding as he adjusts to your home. Christopher said he'd like to join a family that is "fun, nice, and talented." He needs a home in the Chicago area so he can maintain contact with his siblings.

Esperanza [3917] Esperanza, 13, is an affectionate young lady who loves to spend time with the other children in her foster home. She especially likes it when they play softball together or go to the swimming pool. While Esperanza doesn't talk, she can use sign language to communicate some of her needs. When she's on her own, Esperanza enjoys watching cartoons and looking at picture books.

Esperanza's teacher said she is a warm, friendly child. Her foster family said that they love Esperanza and enjoy spending time with her. Parents for her can be patient and kind, and you can be willing to help Esperanza achieve her full potential. You can learn more about her special needs. Esperanza will do best as the only child in a family or with one brother or sister.

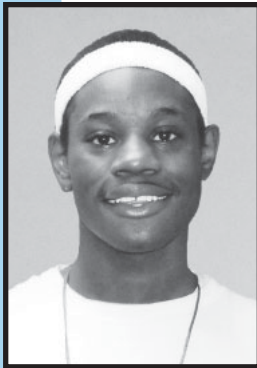
If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org.

Illinois Families Now and Forever
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Chicago, Illinois 60601

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Call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois 800-572-2390.



Alontae [7280]



Bradley [5934]



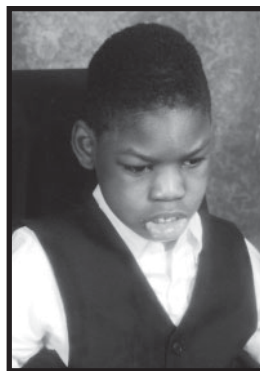
Brianna [7067]



Illinois State Fair
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Charlie [7258]



Christopher
[7002]



Esperanza
[3917]

Call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois 800-572-2390.